



Otter Class Half Term Newsletter

Dear Otter Class Families,

Woah, we're half-way there! It's hard to believe that half of this academic year is already behind us. In one respect it feels like 5 minutes since the transition sessions in year 5, when the children were beyond excited to be referred to as "year 6" for the first time; on the other hand, we've done so much this year that things like the residential already feel like a distant memory!

SATs: While SATs is not the sole focus of year 6, we do only have 8 school weeks left before they're upon us! The children are all so keen to do well that I think it's important to mention them at this point.

Last week: Over the last week, the children completed another round of tests. We were really pleased with the results and the improvements the children are making. More importantly, the children handled them brilliantly. Each time we do these, they become a little less scary, a little more normal. There were lots of really positive comments and children who were very proud of themselves for finishing papers they haven't finished before or finding a particular paper easier to answer than usual.

Looking ahead: With each round, apart from a lot of marking (180 papers!) I do a lot of data analysis. It means I can see if there are areas of learning to target, or children who need additional support in a particular area.

Early in the next half term, I will be having pupil conferences with all the children to talk about their marks, how things look at this point in time, and what their/our next steps need to be.

I've spoken before about teaching the children to be more independent and, with half of the year gone already, this is a major ongoing focus. We've talked a lot this week about things the children can do to help themselves with their learning and this will form part of the pupil conferences too. There have been lots of parents, and children, asking what they can do at home to help too. This is brilliant and I thank you for being wonderfully supportive grown-ups. The homework section below will give you some ways to help at home over this half term, and beyond.

SATs Meeting: You should have received a ParentMail about a SATs meeting on the first day back. It would be amazing to see as many of you there as possible. It will be a great opportunity to find out the absolute best ways to help at home. The children will really benefit from you having the information so if there is any way you can make, please do come along.

Homework:

Let me begin by saying that the half term homework is **optional**. I have intentionally sent home plenty for the children to do, but there will be no consequence from me if it is not completed. What I have said to the children though is there is a *natural consequence* – the children who take time this half term to do some work and particularly challenge themselves by picking the things that they find the trickiest, will absolutely see the benefit next half term and within their next set of scores. While improvements were seen from everyone, bigger jumps came from those who work hard; in lessons, with

their homework, with reading, on TTRS, and even choose to do extra learning because they enjoy it. This is the kind of attitude we would love to see from everyone.

Punctuation, Grammar, Maths and Reading booklet: I've sent home a booklet for all children which has punctuation and grammar, maths and reading exercises linked to SATs. They are split into 5 days with some additional activities at the end. Children do not have to do them all or do them in order. If maths is something they are strong at, look at the grammar or reading first for example.

Reading: One of the things to come from the most recent set of tests was around reading. The reading test results were superb. Having looked into the paper a little deeper, the particular paper we did had less words to read than in more recent tests, meaning children had longer to answer the questions. This isn't a bad thing: it proves that the children are very capable when it comes to answering the questions, which is fantastic. However, following recent trends, the number of words they need to read is likely to be higher in the "real thing". This shows us that speed is the factor we need to work on here and it really is important that everyone does work hard on it.

All children should have come home with more than enough reading material to last them the half term. They also have a reading target they set for themselves. We're asking all children to really put an effort in with their reading. As with anything, the more you do it, the easier you find it and the quicker you get. See below for information about the reading challenge.

TTRS: As with reading, speed is important in the 3 maths papers. Regular time on TTRS will increase speed of multiplication and division fact recall. It also frees up cognitive load, the amount the brain has to think about, allowing children to focus on the trickier parts of the question, without having to also think long and hard about multiplication facts too.

I was really pleased with the response to the homework. Lots of children were really excited by the booklet and they were all very keen to choose extra books. Please keep this momentum going by being equally as positive about the homework and the opportunity to enhance their learning. I am not asking for hours and hours of work from them every day! It's the holidays and everyone needs a rest, to re-charge, spend time with family and friends and have fun. Replacing a little bit of screen time with a book or the homework booklet, or choosing TTRS over a different game for a short while, isn't much but will make a world of difference.

Reading challenge:

This half term, the challenge isn't just about reading but about all homework. I will be looking at each child individually and assessing their "effort score" for the half term. Prizes will be won and rewards will be given out.

Children have their reading records and still need to be completing these. This time, stamps will be rewarded each time the children:

- ❖ Read at home 3 times
- ❖ Finish a book and passing the quiz
- ❖ Do the bonus challenge which is reading aloud. Bonus points for videoing themselves and sending to otter@hinghamprimary.org.uk as it would be brilliant to hear the children reading and potentially even hear improvement from start to end of the half term.
- ❖ Complete an activity in the back of the reading record.
- ❖ Complete and pass 2 article quizzes
- ❖ Are read to by an adult.

All of the above need to be recorded in the reading record.

You will see the addition of “being read to by an adult.” I know we are aiming to improve the children’s reading ability and speed, however, as I said at the very start and have said all year, we are **not** only focused on SATs.

One of our other big aims this year is to create a class full of children who love stories; reading and writing them! You can help with that by reading regularly to your child at home. Why not choose a chapter book together and read a chapter at bedtime? The benefits of being read to are immense. At the moment, very few children in the class say they are being read to at home and we would love to change that. If you don’t have a book at home that is suitable, your child is more than welcome to borrow a book from school to take home for this purpose; maybe something they would like to read but that is currently above their range.

Dates to remember (subject to change):

- Half Term – Monday 17th to Friday 21st February
- Back to school – Monday 24th February
- SATs meeting – Monday 24th February 3:20 (Please find a way to attend if you possibly can.)
- 150 laps week – Monday 24th to Friday 28th February
- Year 6 Height and Weight Measurements Programme – Tuesday 25th February
- Pancake day (PE) – Tuesday 4th March
- World Book Day – Thursday 6th March
- Spring Personal Best Day – Tuesday 11th March
- Young Carers Action Day – Wednesday 12th March

General reminders:

PE: Next half term, our PE days will be Monday and Wednesday.

Please remind your children to dress appropriately on PE days.

- Hair should be tied back.
- Watches and other jewellery should not be worn.
- Earrings **must** be removed.
- Badges cannot be worn for PE. To avoid loss (of badges and time) please leave these at home on PE days.

Lost property: Please label all items to make it as easy as possible to return things to the correct child and as difficult as possible for them to lose things! This includes all uniform items, bags, water bottles, spare shoes, wellies, hats, scarves, gloves, lunchboxes (including any additional Tupperware), snack boxes and anything else brought in.

Please remember, if there is anything you want to discuss, you can catch me on the playground for a quick chat or you can email otter@hinghamprimary.org.uk

Have a lovely half term!

Mrs Moore